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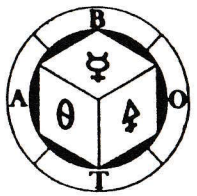
TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 19



BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Nineteen

THE SERPENT POWER

The Hebrew letter Teth (ט) means **snake.** If you examine the form of the character, you will see that it is a conventionalized picture of a coiled serpent. The serpent is one of the most frequently used, and one of the most important, occult symbols. The Wise Ones employ it when they wish to compress their knowledge of the Great Magical Agent into a single emblem.

The Great Magical Agent is an actual force employed every day by everyone. It is cosmic electricity, the UNIVERSAL life-principle, the **conscious** energy which takes form as all existing things and builds them all from within. In human personality, it is specially manifested as a subtle kind of nerve-force to which our Oriental brethren give the name **Kundalini**, "the coiled one".

Learning to control the Magical Agent is part of the daily work of every student of Ageless Wisdom. One step toward control is to establish a clear intellectual perception of the truth that all the various forms of physical existence are merely transformations of this **one** energy. The world is full of a number of things, but all are disguises for the **One Thing.** The essential nature of the **One Thing** is **Spirit.**

The old Hebrew name for the mode of consciousness represented by the letter Teth is "Intelligence of the Secret of Works". The noun translated "works" is sometimes rendered as "wages" or "reward". The secret of right work is to make sure that whatever one does will bring about the **intended** result. What is the essence of that secret? The knowledge that the working power is the inexhaustible energy of the One Spirit. "I do nothing of myself: the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

There is the secret. To be absolutely sure of success, we must correctly identify the working power as being the One Spirit. By so doing, we rid ourselves of concern as to the outcome of our work.

This unconcern about results is by no means indifference. Neither is it a vague, dreamy feeling that "all will be well". One must be specific, knowing what is intended, and fully resolved to bring about definite results. The thing to avoid is anxiety about the outcome.

Jesus taught this plainly. The BHAGAVAD-GITA says the secret of right work is to have no attachment to results. Misunderstood by many, especially by those who have twisted it into an excuse for mental haziness, this idea is perfectly sound. Moreover, it is easy to practice.

To be **anxious** about the future, to be **concerned** about results, is to make mental images of failure. He who does this concentrates on a mental pattern of **what he does not want** — consciously. Often, sad to say, this anxiety is a subconscious determination to fail. More persons fail because they really hope to than is generally understood. Their will to fail is based on a subconscious fear that they lack power to carry their projects through.

Hence to cure that fear is essential; and the cure is easily effected by seeing, first of all, that every one of us has at his disposal a power perfectly adequate to accomplish whatever we intend to do, and whatever we are able to image clearly and definitely. When we grasp this truth, subconscious fears are dissipated, and with them goes the hidden will to fail.

To this end, begin to think now of **everything** as being a manifestation of Spirit. You may find it helpful to think of everything as being a direct expression of one radiant **mental** energy. Only to those who fail to understand its nature does the Great Magical Agent seem to be a blind, mechanical force.

Learn to think of it as conscious, intelligent energy. **Practice** thinking this. **Over and over again as you make contact with the various objects in your environment, remind yourself of their real nature.** Try to see, hear, smell, taste and touch the One Spirit everywhere. No matter if this idea be familiar. Get it to permeate your whole organism. Knowing it in your brain is not enough. **Make it second nature by repetition.**

What, in the second paragraph of this lesson, is named Kundalini, is the special form of the Great Magical Agent utilized for occult "works of power". Fortunately, it is dormant in most persons. We say "fortunately", because it is a tremendous force, as potent for destruction and debasement as for integration and illumination. It may not be trifled with. Make no attempt to awaken it until you are sure you understand our instructions, and take every precaution we recommend. You will know what to do, and why, if you study these lessons carefully, for they reveal the true secret of works.

We appeal here to your good sense, and to your prudence, not to base fears. The ability to control this force may be developed easily once its nature is understood. The conditions under which it may be brought into activity safely include: purity of mind and desire; high aspirations and ideals; utter unselfishness in action.

Every attempt to express these states of consciousness through right action makes an actual change in your organism. When the sum of a great number of small changes effects a sufficient total alteration, you will find yourself ready to awaken the serpent power and you will know just what to do.

Why is this force called the serpent power? So many persons suppose the serpent to be always a symbol of evil that some answer to this question seems appropriate here.

Most of our notions are based on a literal reading of the allegory of the Fall in the third chapter of Genesis. There we read that the serpent was more **subtile** than any other beast of the field. (The field is the same field which is represented by the letter-name Cheth, which corresponds to Key 7.)

The ordinary meaning of the Hebrew adjective translated **subtile** is "clever, cunning, crafty, dissembling." Yet the same word, with different vowel-points, means "bare, naked, uncovered." Here is a reference to one marked characteristic of the Great Magical Agent. It conceals the true nature of things by seeming to expose them uncovered.

The Great Magical Agent is the indefinable **something** which presents itself to us under various appearances. In every guise it seems to show itself openly without the least concealment. It has taken millenniums for man to learn that every visible form is a veil of concealment for a hidden truth.

Hence it is that they who call themselves "realists" are, of all persons, farthest from having any notion of the true Reality. For them, **appearances** constitute the only truth worth a moment's consideration. If such persons enter the field of art, they wallow in what they call "naked truth", when all the time they are simply parading their familiarity with undressed lies. Usually their productions are characterized by extreme emphasis on unpleasant details of appearances.

A true "realist" is he who is not taken in by the seeming openness of externals. He understands the subtlety of the serpent power and turns it to good use. For remember, the same Genesis which tells us the serpent was the tempter includes the snake among the creatures of whom it was said: "And God saw that it was good."

If we are to be influenced by Scripture, we must take its whole into account and the Bible is explicit in its declaration that the law of the Lord is perfect, and all his works part of a success process. Hence, throughout the history of humanity, great initiates have called themselves and their pupils "good serpents". The Christian admonition, "Be ye wise as serpents", echoes this.

The motion of the Great Magical Agent is serpentine because it is both wavy, or undulating, and spiral. This coiling, spiral, vibratory motion of the serpent power is one reason for associating it with the number 8, for 8 is a numeral symbol of rhythmic vibration.

To write 8, one begins at the top and describes a letter S, serpentine in form. S is also an alphabetical symbol for a hissing sound. Continuing the movement, one forms curves **reciprocal** to those first described. Thus in writing a figure 8 we make the same curved lines which are shown in the caduceus of Hermes by two intertwined snakes. These are also the lines of movement traced by the serpent power within the human body. Thus 8 in this Key is more than a symbol. It is a diagrammatic representation of the path of the serpent power as it moves through man's nervous system.

Except 0, 8 is the only figure that can be written over and over again without lifting pen from paper. Thus it is a sign of endless activity. This relates 8 to the serpent, because snakes shed their skins, and the ancients, observing this, supposed that these animals renewed their whole organisms also. So, from time immemorial, the serpent has been a symbol of immortality and eternity.

In Christian occultism, 8 is sometimes said to be the Dominical Number, or special number representing Christ. Yet it is also a symbol for the Holy Spirit, sometimes described as a feminine potency. This is the reason the 8 in Key 1, and that over the head of the woman in the Key you are studying now, is placed in a horizontal, or feminine, position.

Again, 8 symbolizes the ancient doctrine that all opposites are effects of a single cause, and that balanced, reciprocal action and reaction between opposites results in harmony. Some of the Pythagoreans even called 8 **Harmonia.** What they had in mind is a great practical secret of Ageless Wisdom.

Attributed to Key 8, through the letter Teth, is the zodiacal sign Leo, ruled by the Sun. Astrologers say Leo governs the heart, the back, the spine and spinal cord (which is the main channel for the bodily manifestations of the serpent power). Among the tribes of Israel, Leo is represented by the Tribe of Judah, whose standard bore a lion.

The Hebrew name for Leo is אריה, Arieh. The letters of this word may be re-arranged to spell ראיה reaiyah, "sight". Sight is attributed to the letter Heh, (ה), and is therefore associated with the sign Aries.

The numeral value of each of these words, 216, is the same as that of the noun רוגז, rogaz, which may be translated "trembling, vibration". This noun is particularly connected with the letter Samekh, the sign Sagittarius, and Key 14.

Again, 216 is the number of the word גבורה, Geburah, Strength. This is the Hebrew for the title of Key 8. It is also the name of the fifth of the ten spheres on the Qabalistic diagram, the

Tree of Life. This sphere is the Sphere of Mars, or field in which the power of that planet is active.

These correspondences all point in one direction. They indicate that strength, or working power, is to be sought in a form of vibration which is fiery in quality, which is active in the sense of sight, and which is connected in some way with the functions of the heart and spine.

This power is the **light power** that makes vision possible. It is also the **life power** actually centered in the heart, and coursing through the great "main cable" of the spinal cord, whence it is distributed by the nerves to every part of the physical organism.

The scene in Key 8 is an open plain, in contrast to the walled city of Key 7. What we are considering here is the operation of a law at work everywhere in nature. In no sense is this law dependent on artificial conditions of man-made civilization. The law of suggestion is always in operation. It is the **primary** law of subconsciousness.

Every kingdom of nature is represented in this picture. The woman stands for the human kingdom. The lion is chief of the animal kingdom. Roses are royal flowers, and the rest of the flowers, grass and trees belong to the vegetable kingdom. They grow from the earth, which is disintegrated stone, and in the background is a mountain like that in the background of the sixth Key. It completes the representation of the mineral kingdom.

This serves to remind us that all natural forms and forces are expressions of the **one** Great Magical Agent and are all subject to the law pictured here. The animal nature is subordinate to the human, the vegetable to the animal, the mineral to the vegetable. This control does not need to be established by any act of ours. It is already in effect. Yet the greater number of human beings experience the consequences of its negative operation because they do not know how to reap the benefits of its positive application.

The difference between a tyro in practical occultism and a great adept is this: the tyro has little or no knowledge of the fact that subconsciousness at the human level automatically responds to the predominant suggestions which originate at the conscious level. Hence he sets up activities having reactions which are negative and pain-bearing. His subconscious control of forces below his conscious level makes those forces take form as destructive reaction in his own body, and in the bodies of other persons. Furthermore, this destructive reaction extends into the realms of nature below the animal kingdom, and the result is that the person finds his control of subconsciousness working in **reverse.** Thus it comes about that everything and everybody **seem** to be against him.

An adept, on the contrary, **knows** that the subtle power of the Great Magical Agent conceals the true nature of things by seeming to expose them uncovered. Hence he takes nothing at its face value. He looks attentively at the world reported by his senses. Thus he detects hidden relationships, and in the long run he comes consciously and subconsciously under the

guidance of the One Self symbolized by the Hierophant, by the angel in Key 6, and by the charioteer in Key 7. Then his personal subconsciousness is purified and wears the white garment of wisdom, as in Key 8. The consequence is that the reactions from the kingdoms of nature below the human level are favorable.

There has been no change in the underlying law. Neither has the adept **gained** control which the tyro has not. The adept uses the already existing law **positively.** The tyro employs the same law negatively. An adept is wise: a tyro is ignorant. That is all; but in that single difference is the difference between freedom and bondage, joy and misery, success and failure, health and disease.

Your practice this week is highly important. Spare no effort to carry it out. The most valuable lesson you can learn is that of **seeing through appearances** and the consequent discovery of the One Reality veiled by them. Whenever you have anything to do with another person, try to keep in mind that it is not the appearance, not the external details of personality, that you speak or write to, or that you are in any way concerned with. Remember that his inner nature is **identical** with yours, and try to see, with the mind's eye, the real man behind the mask of personality. Do this with the members of your family, with your friends and business associates, even with strangers you pass on the street.

At first this may seem difficult, especially when you are dealing with those who, for any reason (or unreason), are unpleasant or repulsive to you. Make the attempt just the same. You will find greater practical values under such circumstances than in your dealings with persons you like.

Don't make the mistake of being sentimental or emotional about it. This is an exercise in suggestion. Look deliberately for the good and the beautiful in every one. Don't just affirm it. Don't pretend it's there. LOOK! You'll find it when you develop eyes to see.

Watch your tongue. Don't gossip. Do not discuss the unlovable qualities of any other person. Make an effort to see the Self of all men and women you meet as perfect. Thus will you help yourself by telling yourself the truth about all men, and the power of your thought will bless those on whom you turn it.

This exercise has far-reaching consequences which we purposely refrain from discussing now. It will be better and more interesting for you to find out for yourself. This is one of the most valuable, though simple, means of developing really penetrative vision. He who has this insight possesses a key to limitless power.

COLORING INSTRUCTIONS

KEY 8. STRENGTH

Yellow:	Background, lion's eye.
Green:	Foliage, rose leaves, leaves in woman's hair, foreground (but do not extend all the way in the right foreground, because the mountain range carries over to the right.)
Violet:	Mountain (both sides of background).
White:	Woman's dress, lion's teeth.
Blonde:	Woman's hair.
Red:	Roses, lion, flowers in woman's hair.